



Draft Environmental Assessment

Aunt Molly Wildlife Management Area and Pocha Ranch Cooperative Habitat Management Lease Agreement

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to enter into a 10-year Cooperative Habitat Management Lease Agreement with the Pocha Ranch. Under this proposed agreement, 70 acres of tame-grass pasture on FWP's Aunt Molly WMA (AMWMA) would be leased for wintering livestock, grazing and/or haying in exchange for managing 53 acres of riparian habitat surrounding the Blackfoot River on the Pocha Ranch as part of the AMWMA (Figure 1). These lands are in Powell County, about 4 miles NNW of Helmville (Appendix Figure 1).

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

In accordance with Montana Code Annotated (MCA), FWP is authorized to acquire and operate land and enter into leases: . . . *The department may develop, operate, and maintain acquired lands or water . . . : (b) as land or water suitable for game, bird, fish, or fur-bearing animal restoration, propagation, or protection* (§ 87-1-209 (2), MCA). *The department is authorized to enter into leases of land under its control in exchange for services to be provided by the lessee on the leased land* (§ 87-1-209 (7), MCA).

3. Name of project:

Aunt Molly WMA – Pocha Ranch Cooperative Habitat Management Lease Agreement

4. Anticipated Schedule:

Estimated Commencement Date: May 1, 2016
Estimated Completion Date: May 1, 2025

5. Location affected by proposed action:

FWP-owned lands located in Powell County (Figure 2):

Township 14 North, Range 11 West
Section 33, a portion of the S½ of the N½
Leased land encompasses 70 acres in total.

Pocha parcel located in Powell County (Figure 2):

Township 14 North, Range 11 West
Section 33, a portion of the W½ of the SW¼, 53 acres

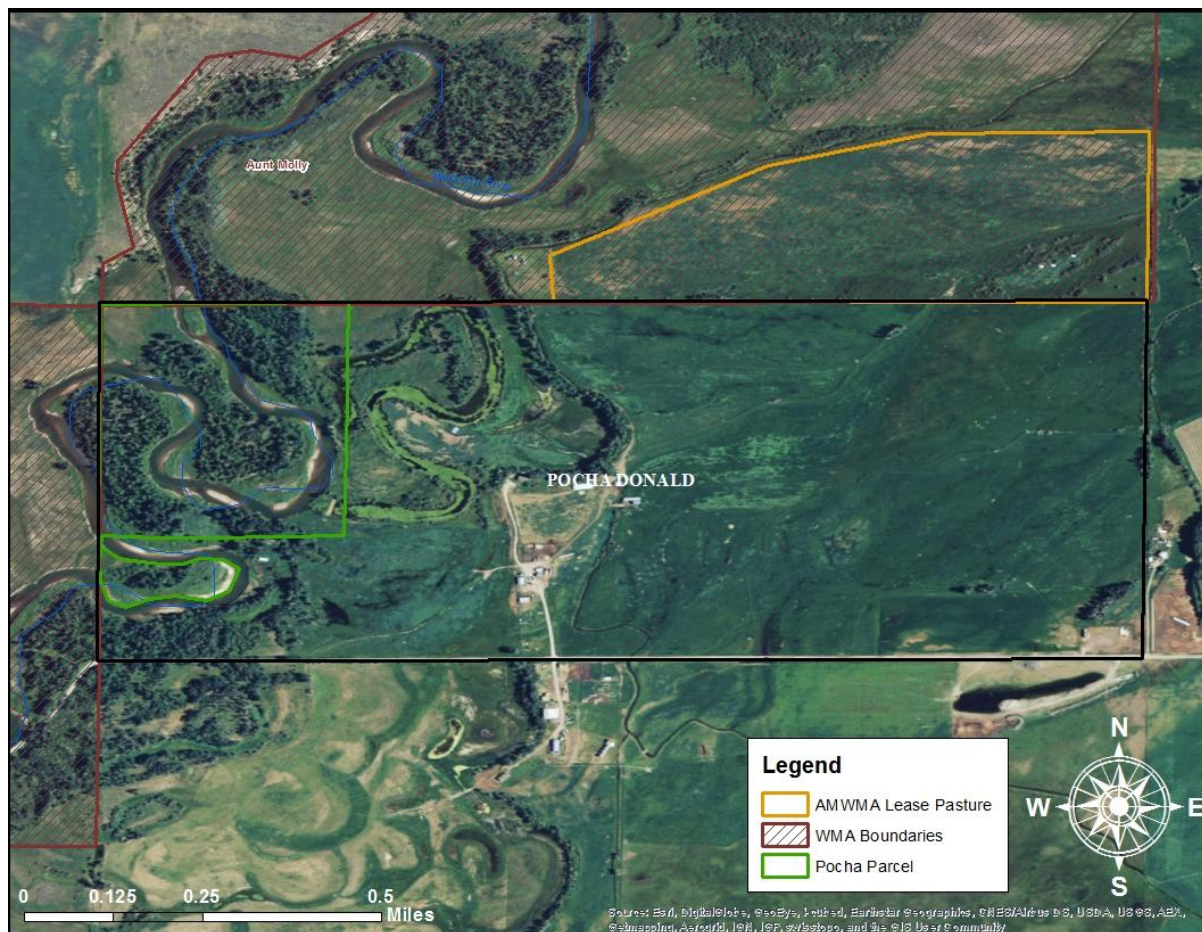


Figure 1. Location of proposed exchange of use between FWP and Pocha Ranch. The area bounded in green is owned by the Pocha Ranch, but would be managed by FWP as part of the FWP's Aunt Molly WMA (AMWMA). The area bounded by gold outline is fenced separately from the rest of AMWMA and would be managed by the Pocha Ranch. Both parcels would provide public hunting and recreational opportunities consistent with AMWMA public use rules.

6. Project size:

Approximately 70 acres of FWP-owned lands adjacent/near to the Blackfoot River.

Approximately 53 acres of privately-owned lands surrounding the Blackfoot River.

<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>	
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>53</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u>70</u>	Dry cropland	<u>70</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	<u>53</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
Areas		Other	<u>0</u>

7. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

- (a) **Permits:** None Required
- (b) **Funding:** Not applicable
- (c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:** None

8. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:

Montana FWP proposes to enter into a cooperative habitat enhancement exchange-of-use lease agreement with Dan Pocha (hereafter, Pocha Ranch or lessee). Under the proposed action the Pocha Ranch would have limited use for wintering livestock and grazing (cattle) or haying of approximately 70 acres of dry-land tame-grass pasture located on the Aunt Molly WMA. In exchange, 53 acres of Blackfoot River riparian habitat, owned by the Pocha Ranch, would be managed as part of the WMA. This Pocha Ranch parcel would be managed for wildlife habitat and would be open for public hunting and recreational opportunity that is consistent with public use rules on AMWMA.

Historically the 70-acre cultivated pasture on the AMWMA was used for haying and seasonal grazing prior to FWP taking over ownership. After FWP purchased the land, the Pocha Ranch continued to lease the pasture from FWP. The pasture has not been cultivated or planted for several years and the resulting condition is a stagnant dry-land pasture that provides inadequate cover for nesting migratory birds and marginal forage for deer and elk. Under this proposed agreement the lessee would be required to manage weeds and maintain fences on the 70-acre parcel within AMWMA, while excluding grazing from the lessee's 53-acre property along the Blackfoot River and providing walk-in recreational access on and through their property from the WMA.

The proposed action would allow the AMWMA hayfield to be available for Pocha Ranch use annually from January 1 to May 1. During this time, the lessee may use the hayfield at his discretion for feeding hay to cow:calf pairs. From May 1-July 14 (green up) all cattle would be excluded from the 70-acre AMWMA pasture and allowed to return from July 1-September 1. Additionally, the Pocha Ranch would have the option to plant the pasture using a seed mix that is cooperatively agreed upon by FWP and the lessee. Tilling would occur during the fall dormant season and planting would occur during fall or spring. The lessee would be required to manage for weeds and maintain fences on the 70-acre AMWMA parcel during the proposed 10-year term of this agreement. Purchase of grass seed would be negotiated between the parties.

In exchange for use of this portion of the WMA, a 53-acre portion of the Pocha Ranch would be managed by FWP as part of the AMWMA. Consistent with the WMA, this would entail idling from livestock grazing and providing public access for hunting and other recreation as allowed by AMWMA rules. Currently, the grazing schedule on this river bottom parcel allows grazing to occur at anytime, each and every year. Excluding grazing would allow riparian vegetation to mature, resulting in improved wildlife cover, increased river bank stability, and decreased sediment delivery to the Blackfoot River. Increased vegetation would provide nesting habitat for riparian-associated migratory birds, and cover for deer and a dense concentration of grizzly bears.

Additionally, the 53-acre Pocha Ranch parcel would provide land access to an isolated portion of AMWMA that is effectively landlocked to all but stream access. (Montana FWP would be

responsible for maintaining temporary fences to keep cattle out and posting boundary signs.) Lands in the section-33 portion of AMWMA are separated from the rest of the WMA because these are located “catty-corner” to the section-32 WMA lands (see map inset in lower left corner of Appendix Figure 1). The section-33 portion of the WMA may be legally accessed by the public from WMA land in section 32--by strictly staying within (between) the high-water marks of the Blackfoot River as it passes through any private land--for *water-related* recreational activities under Montana’s Stream Access Law (§§ 23-2-301 through -322, MCA). Relative to corner crossing, the *Montana Access Guide to Federal and State Lands*¹ states, “Corner crossing (such as at section corners) in checkerboard land patterns is not recommended. Recreationists are advised to obtain permission from the adjacent landowner to reduce conflict and ensure compliance with applicable access laws and rules.” Therefore, FWP does not recommend corner crossing from its section-32 land to get to its section-33 land, but the cooperative habitat management lease agreement would enable crossing from FWP’s section 32 lands into its section 33 lands.

9. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative A: No Action

Under the no action alternative, the Pocha Ranch would not have use of the 70-acre Aunt Molly WMA pasture and would continue to graze its riparian parcel on an annual basis. The public would not gain land access from the WMA’s lands in section 32 to those in section 33.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

The proposed action would allow the Pocha Ranch to feed cow/calf pairs on the 70 acres of Aunt Molly WMA from January 1-May 1 each spring. From May 1-July 14 (green up) all cattle would be excluded from the 70-acre AMWMA pasture and allowed to return from July 15-September 1, post seed-ripe. Additionally, the lessee would have the option to plant the pasture using a seed mix that is cooperatively agreed upon by FWP and the lessee. Tilling would occur during the fall dormant season and planting would occur during fall or spring. The Pocha Ranch would be required to manage for weeds and maintain fences. Seed mix and purchase would be negotiated between the parties, if a new planting were pursued.

In exchange, 53 acres of the Pocha Ranch would be managed by FWP as part of AMWMA. Consistent with the adjacent AMWMA, the lessee’s acreage would be idled from livestock grazing and public use would be allowed consistent with WMA public use rules. In addition, the 53-acre parcel would provide access to an isolated portion of the AMWMA that is otherwise landlocked (Appendix Figure 1). FWP would be responsible for maintaining temporary fences to keep cattle out and posting boundary signs.

¹ Available from this FWP webpage <http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/hunterAccess/toolkit.html> Accessed 22 Feb 2016.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the **Proposed Action** including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X			1.b
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

1.b, Livestock grazing may cause soil disturbance within the fenced boundary of the 70 acre previously cultivated hay pasture and near watering sites. Potential soil disturbances caused by the proposed alternative is expected to be minimal on the grazed pasture. Potential soil disturbances in the permanently rested riparian corridor (53 acres) would be reduced under the proposed alternative.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		X				
f. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X			3.a
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		X				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		X				
n. Other:		X				

3.a, Under the proposed alternative, the lessee would exclude grazing along the Blackfoot River corridor from the current rate ~60 cow/calf pairs.

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4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X			4.a
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X			4.b
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X			4.e
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

4.a, 4.b. The proposed grazing prescription is expected to reduce predominantly tame grass cover and quantity on the AMWMA pasture. At this time of year July 15 – September 1, herbaceous vegetation would be senescent, but the following spring, these grazed areas would provide enhanced green-up, particularly for elk and deer, during the proposed rest period from May 1 – July 14. Temporary electric fencing would be placed around shrubs on the 70-acre AMWMA parcel to minimize potential for over-browsing. The proposed agreement would ensure the 53-acre private property, comprised of riparian vegetation, would be rested from all livestock grazing.

4. e. Livestock can spread noxious weeds. Acres grazed by livestock would be monitored for new weed infestations. The lessee would be required to treat noxious weed infestations on the 70-acre AMWMA pasture.

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**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X			5.b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X			5.c
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)			X			5.h
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				
j. Other:		X				

5.b, 5.c. Livestock grazing activities would reduce the amount of winter forage in the 70-acre AMWMA tame grass pasture. Big game could be temporarily displaced from this field. However, by removing the residual vegetation in late summer with grazing, spring green-up conditions should improve and provide more palatable and attractive forage for grazing wildlife. FWP expects the proposed agreement to have a positive long-term impact on big game, particularly for white-tailed deer, by increasing cover and browse in the 53-acre private riparian parcel that would be rested from all livestock grazing.

In regards to non-game impacts, the reduction in residual cover in the tame grass field could have a short term impact on any ground nesting birds that may utilize the area. However, long term rest from livestock grazing may improve cover and vegetation conditions in the 53-acre riparian parcel that are important for riparian obligate bird species.

5.h. Grizzly bears inhabit the Blackfoot Valley, this proposal to continue temporary use of a 70-acre AMWMA pasture is not expected to adversely affect regular grizzly bear activity. Furthermore, rest of the 53-acre private riparian parcel would improve cover; and reduce disturbance and potential for grizzly bear/livestock conflicts.

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** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

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** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other:			X			8.e

8e. Chemical and biological treatment is part of FWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds on its properties per the guidance of the 2008 Integrated Weed Management Plan. Weed treatment and storage and mixing of the chemicals would be in accordance with standard operating procedures.

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

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** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		X				10.e
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.			X			10.f
g. Other:		X				

10e/f. No revenues would be generated by the grazing lease on the Aunt Molly WMA. Minor additional costs to FWP are expected in the form of fencing materials and boundary signs for the 53-acre private parcel. The lessee would be responsible for maintenance of the pasture fences, weed management, and seed mixture on the 70-acre AMWMA parcel.

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** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?				X		11.a
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			x			11.c
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				
e. Other:		X				

11a/c. Domestic livestock and signs of livestock use on the WMA may be objectionable to some segments of the public. This proposed agreement will provide enhanced wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities including providing access to a landlocked portion of the AMWMA for the public.

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		X				
e. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

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SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. *** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		X				
g. **** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , list any federal or state permits required.		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

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** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

The proposed cooperative habitat management agreement between FWP and the lessee would include all lease stipulations and enforceable control measures.

PART III. NEED FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?

No

2. If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

An EA is appropriate for this project based on minimal impacts and no-impact findings of the Draft EA proposed activity.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any, and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

The public will be notified in the following manners about the opportunity to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternative:

- Legal notice will be published once each in these newspapers: *Independent Record* (Helena), *Missoulian*, and *Silver State Post* (Deer Lodge).
- Public notice will be posted on FWP's webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("Public Notices"); the Draft EA will also be available on this webpage, along with the opportunity to submit comments online.
- A news release will be prepared and distributed to a standard list of media outlets interested in FWP Region 2 issues; this news release will also be posted on FWP's website <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("News," then "News Releases").
- Direct mailing or email notification to adjacent landowners and other interested parties (individuals, groups, agencies).
- Copies of this draft EA may be obtained by mail from Region 2 FWP, 3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula 59804; by phoning 406-542-5540; by emailing shrose@mt.gov; or by viewing FWP's Internet website <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("Public Notices," beginning October 8, 2015).

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope with no significant physical or human impacts and only minor impacts that can be mitigated.

2. Duration of comment period.

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30) days beginning with publication (February 23, 2016) of the legal notice in Region 2 FWP's newspaper of record (*Missoulian*). Comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on March 23, 2016.

Comments may be made online on the EA's webpage, mailed to the FWP address below, or emailed to Sharon Rose at shrose@mt.gov :

MT FWP Region 2
Attn: Aunt Molly WMA Lease
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

For questions about the project, please contact Scott Eggeman by email at seggeman@mt.gov or by phone at 406-542-5542.

PART V. EA PREPARATION

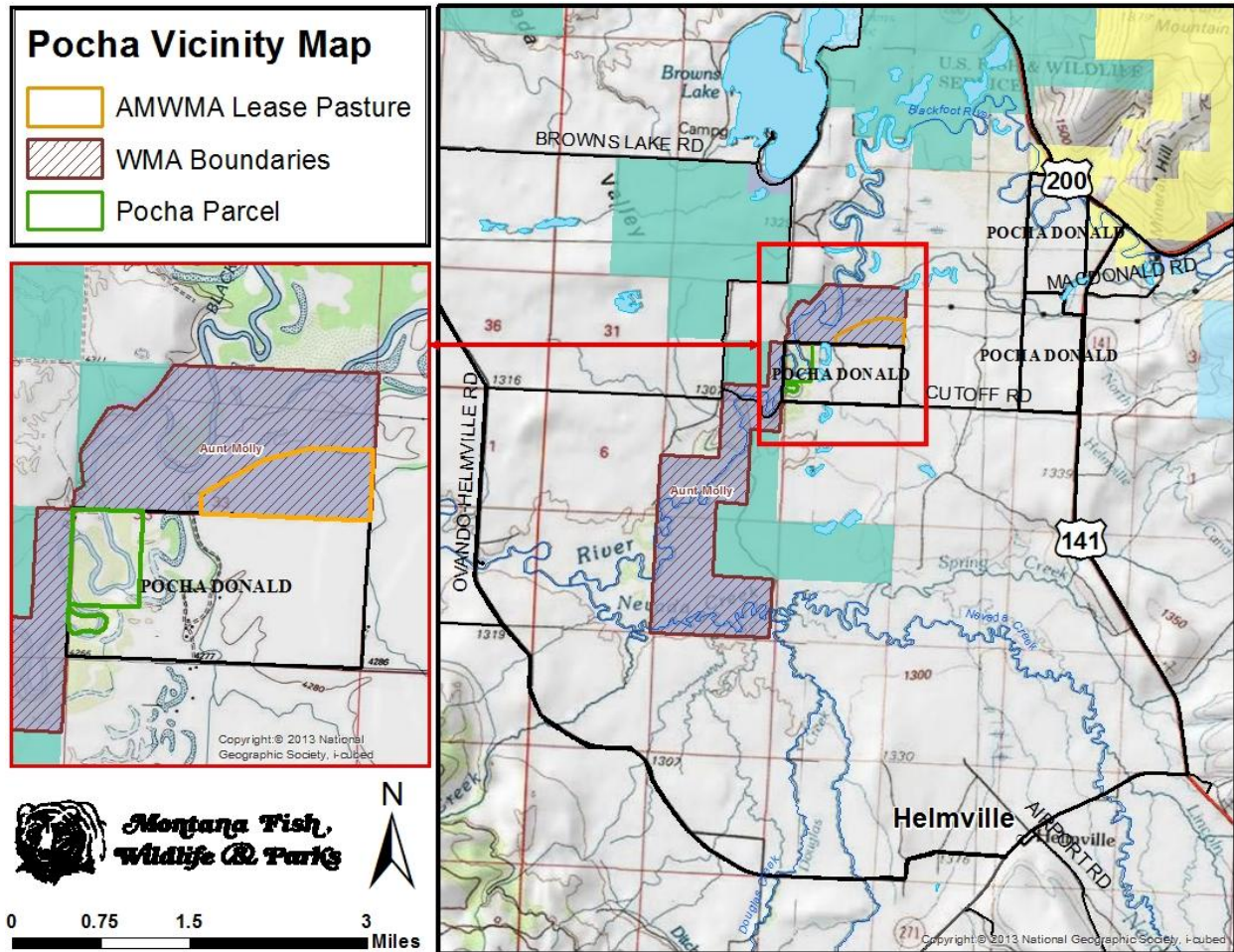
1. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Scott Eggeman,
Region 2 Area Wildlife Biologist,
3201 Spurgin Road.,
Missoula, MT. 59804.
406-542-5542.
seggeman@mt.gov

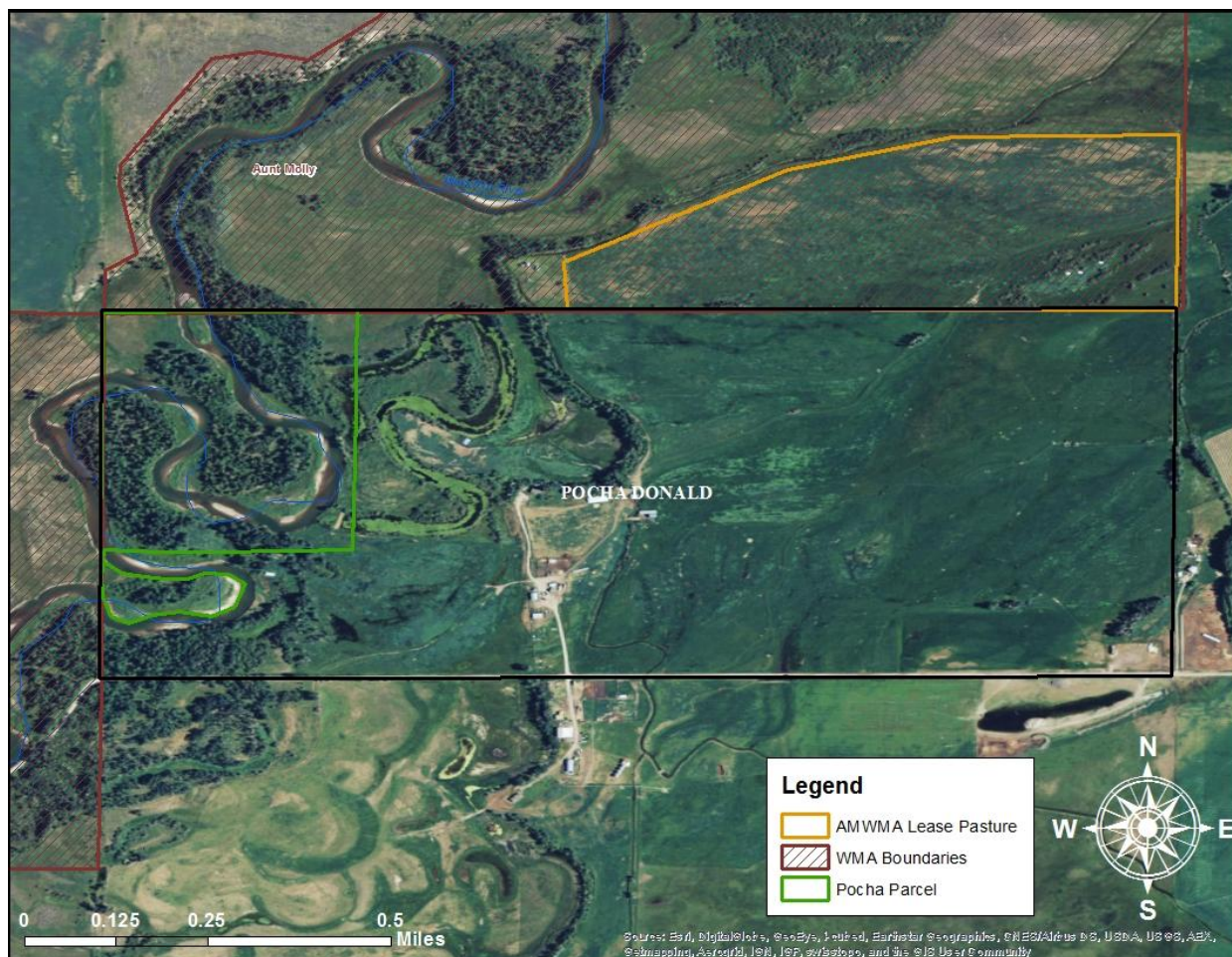
2. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Natural Resources Conservation Service

APPENDIX A



Appendix Figure 1. Vicinity map of the Pocha Ranch and Aunt Molly WMA located approximately 4 miles NNW of Helmville, Montana.



Appendix Figure 2. Aerial map of land owned by FWP and by the Pocha Ranch that is included in the exchange of use cooperative habitat management agreement. The Pocha parcel would be rested from grazing, provide recreational access, and pass through access to an inaccessible portion of the AMWMA.

TERMS OF PAYMENT AND SERVICES PROVIDED

1. The Aunt Molly WMA hayfield would be available for use annually from January 1 to May 1 each year. During this time, the lessee may use the hayfield at his discretion for feeding hay to cow: calf pairs and would be responsible for maintaining fences, weed management, and providing seed mixtures.
2. Approximately 100 AUMs would be provided under terms of this grazing lease, annually on the 70 acres of FWP land, between the dates of July 15 and September 1.
3. Payment for this grazing lease shall be considered from exchange of use of land and additional services provided by the lessee. They are generally outlined below:
 - a. Exchange of Use
 - i. Approximately 53 acres owned by the lessee will be managed by FWP as part of the AMWMA.
 - ii. The lessee shall not graze the 53-acre parcel along the Blackfoot River.
 - iii. The lessee will provide public hunting and recreational opportunities consistent with WMA public use rules within the 53-acre riparian parcel described in this document. Public access to the AMWMA parcels that are currently inaccessible will be allowed via these parcels of private land as well.
 - b. Services Provided
 - i. Conduct annual wildlife-friendly fence maintenance and repair, including setting up and taking down of temporary fence.
 - ii. Weed control and planting of any seed mixture on FWP pasture.